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ABSTRACT

To ascertain the nature and extent of the differences between fraternity and non-fraternity men at the University of Maryland, a study was conducted in June 1969 with a small random sample (approximately 50 in each group). Their spring 1969 semester grades. ACT (or converted SAT) composite scores, and responses to selected items on the 1969 University Student Census were compared. Nonstatistically significant differences were found on academic or biographical variables. Fraternity members differed from independents in their opinions on only two items: they more frequently felt they had been leaders in high school, and agreed more than independents that students had ample opportunity to participate in university policy-making. The failure of anticipated differences to appear in such areas as racial attitudes and academic versus social emphases may be a function of small sample size. The expectation of differences may also be inaccurate stereotypes of individuals, based on group behaviors. (Author/SW)

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COUNSELING CENTER

Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

College Park, Maryland

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FRATERNITY AND
NON-FRATERNITY MEMBERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

Robert C. Lynch and William E. Sedlacek

Research Report # 12-70

HE 010 147

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SUMMARY

Previous research has indicated that undergraduate males in college social fraternities may differ in several respects from non-fraternity men. Serious questions and issues have arisen relating to the relevance of fraternities and their reflection of attitudes somewhat different from the non-fraternity college male population. An attempt was made to ascertain the nature and extent of the differences between fraternity and non-fraternity men.

A small random sample (approximately 50 in each group) was taken of fraternity and non-fraternity men as of June, 1969. Their spring (1969) semester grades, ACT (or converted SAT) composite scores, and responses to selected items on the 1969 University Student Census were compared. Non statistically significant differences were found on academic or biographical variables. Fraternity members differed from independents in their opinions on only two items: they more frequently felt they had been leaders in high school, and agreed more than independents that students had ample opportunity to participate in University policy-making. Several trends, though non-significant, were observed.

The failure of anticipated differences to appear in such areas as racial attitudes and academic versus social emphases may be a function of small sample size. The expectation of differences may also be innacurate sterotypes of individuals, based on group behaviors. Areas for future study were discussed.

Criticisms of American college social fraternities have been leveled since the inception of their forerunner, Phi Beta Kappa, in 1776, to the present. While it is difficult to assess the degree to which the amount of criticism has fluctuated over the years, in more recent times, the attack has concentrated on their relevance and the type and nature of contributions which fraternities are making (Riesman and Jencks, 1962; Craig, 1969; Robson, 1966; Johnson, 1946, Letchworth, 1969). The role of the modern college fraternity is certainly in need of clarification and delineation (Robson, 1966).

Nationally, fraternity members have generally had higher grade point averages than non-fraternity men, and have evidenced less attrition (Summerskill, 1962; Willingham, 1962; Robson, 1966; Lehman, 1935). Elton and Rose (1968) indicated that members of one fraternity did not differ from members of other fraternities on personality dimensions measured by the Omnibus Personality Inventory; their findings, coupled with the indication that fraternity pledges do differ from independents on such measures of personality as the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule and the Kuder Personal Preference Test (Jackson and Winkler, 1964) imply that even on some personality variables, fraternity members are a different "breed." Kaludis and Zatkin (1964) found that pledges and independents at the University of Maryland did differ on several demographic and aspirational variables.

As the first stage of a project designed to ascertain the role and relevance of fraternities at the University of Maryland, the present study is an attempt at determining the nature of fraternity membership

at the University. It is essential that a picture of the male "Greeks" be provided to see if, in effect, a subculture is existent. Generalizations about the opinions and sterotypes of fraternity men at the University need to be examined. An examination of the relative numerical strength of fraternities tests the hypothesis that fraternities have decreased in size in proportion to the campus male population. This question has been of concern to Greeks, confusing to some University administrators and has been supportive of the points made by many honest critics of fraternities as they are presently constituted.

METHOD

Fraternity members, for the purposes of this preliminary study, were defined as those who were listed in spring, 1969 with the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs as being members ("actives" or "pledges") of fraternities. A random sample of fraternity members who responded to the 1969 University Student Census (USC) was selected; and an equivalent number of non-fraternity members (excluding freshmen) responding to the 1969 USC was also selected. The USC is administered to nearly all full time undergraduates at the University each year.

The reported membership of fraternities for the years between 1950 and 1969 which are available was examined to determine the total number of members in fraternities for selected years, and the proportion of the male student body which fraternity men composed.

Finally, to assess indirectly the effectiveness of fraternity rush, or the alternative hypothesis that freshmen become disenchanted with the

idea of fraternities, those males who were freshmen in the fall of 1968 and indicated on the 1968 USC (item 34) that they were "somewhat interested" or "intend to join" a fraternity were identified; the percentage of those who appear as fraternity members on the spring, 1969 listing of fraternities was noted.

The two samples were compared (by t-test) on their mean ACT (or converted SAT) composite scores, their mean Grade Point Average (GPA) for the spring, 1969 semester, and their responses to selected 1969 USC items.

RESULTS

There was no significant difference in GPA mean between fraternity members (2.30) and non-fraternity members (2.34) at the .05 level.

Similarly there were no significant differences between means on ACT (or converted SAT) for fraternity men (23.07) and non-fraternity men (23.79) at the .05 level.

The proportion of University undergraduate males who were members of fraternities has declined considerably in the last ten years, while in numbers alone, fraternities can be said to have increased in membership (Table 1).

On the 1968 USC, 1273 freshman males (59% of total freshmen males) indicated they were "somewhat interested" in fraternities; 83 (7%) were in a fraternity as of the spring semester of their freshman year. On that same USC, 635 freshmen men indicated they "intend to join" a fraternity; by spring of that year, 109 of them (17%) were in a fraternity.

Only twice did the two groups differ significantly in responses to USC items (analyses by Chi-square and t-tests) (Table 5). Fraternity members were more likely to agree that "students have ample opportunity to participate in University policy-making" (item 35), and fraternity members agreed more often that they were leaders in high school (item 45).

Tables 2,3, and 4, though not reflecting any significant differences, relate to two major issues confronting Greeks--their valuation of the social aspects of college life, and their racial attitudes.

Although no additional statistically significant differences appeared, some trends were evidenced in responses to the "opinion" items (Table 5) on the USC (e.g., less "academic-mindedness," and more likelihood of supporting the administrators).

DISCUSSION

It has been some time since a description of the fraternities at the University of Maryland has been offered; Kaludis & Zatkin (1964) have provided comparative data on fraternity and non-fraternity freshmen. Several results from that study are supported, across classes, in this report.

Fraternities do not seem to be composed of academically higher or potentially higher performers, although chapters have, as units, performed differentially. Yet fraternity literature and rushing techniques purport that the fraternity member is a higher caliber man academically. Fraternity scholastic requirements for membership would seem to serve as incentives which would yield higher grade point averages. Fraternity members do feel they were leaders in high school, thus offering some support for the hypothesis of them being above average in some respects. The degree to which fraternities "screen"rushees and potential pledges is unknown.

The "persistent rumors" regarding the fraternity system's imminemt demise seem somewhat exaggerated, yet fraternities represent a decreasing percentage of male undergraduates. The call for increasing relevance in all areas of student life is sounded more and more frequently in reference to fraternities. Failure of fraternities to adjust to a changing society (e.g., anti-intellectualism and discriminatory membership selection practices) is often cited (Letchworth, 1969). Fraternities, for their part, may be defensive and suspicious of the University, which they feel is applying a double standard, using special procedures and requiring differential performance (e.g. scholarship and desciplinary practices) with them and not other groups or individuals.

Fraternities cite their decreasing proportion of undergraduate males as a function of University actions and a "different kind of freshmen." Either freshmen lose interest in fraternities after they are on campus ("bad press," possibly), or fraternities are not actively or effectively seeking out and attracting interested freshmen. The other possible explanation for the results found (Table 1) is that fraternities contact, even pledge, these freshmen, yet lose them somewhere in the pledging process.

Table 2, although not demonstrating differences statistically more significant than those that may occur by chance (possibly because of sample size), seems to indicate a possibly higher value placed by fraternity members than by non-members on extracurricular, social activities in terms of their contribution to personal development. The answer to the question of the relevance of fraternities for fraternity members may lie therein.

The data do not present a clear picture of the racial attitudes of fraternity members. It does not seem on the basis of the limited data here, that fraternity members are more racist in terms of issues such as why few black students attend the university and how to improve education for blacks (and whites) in the state.

Fraternities appear to many as "establishment-oriented," rather conservative units on campus. Responses to several USC items seem to bear this out, though not significantly so. Generally, fraternity members feel students have channels for complaints and opportunities for participation in policy-making.

IMPLICATIONS

Limitations of the present study's sample size, design, and intent, as well as the heuristic nature of any study lead to several considerations for future study. A further analysis of the fraternity and non-fraternity population on academic dimensions should include an analysis of covariance design to more accurately ascertain the nature of any differential scholastic performance. Attrition rates should also be studied.

An assessment by fraternity and non-fraternity members of the relevance of the fraternity system should be undertaken. Such and evaluation would include, for example, a further study of racial attitudes and an examination of the existence and nature of externally or self-imposed self-sufficiency on the part of fraternities; that is, the interaction between the University and its resources and the fraternities could be studied with a focus on determining possible courses of action to remediate a less than desireable situation.

The stated goals and objectives of fraternities, and their possible behavioral implications, as well as the implicit objectives as currently manifested by behaviors should be considered. The extent to which fraternity ideals are maintained as realistic goals, or are supplanted by others, may provide an indication of the role a fraternity plays in its members' lives. Relevance, it may be found, is defined differentially among college males.

TABLE 1

Fraternity Membership* for Selected Years

Year	Number** in Fraternities	Number** of Male Undergraduates	Percent
1952	1089	4654	23
1955	1341	5033	27
1958	1348	5772	23
1959	1464	6229	24
1961	1359	7241	19
1964	1428	9126	16
1969	1721	14630	12

*membership= "actives" and "pledges"
**figures reported for spring semesters
Source: Office of Fraternity Affairs
Counseling Center grade point average reports for organizations

TABLE 2

Responses to Item #7 on 1969 USC

#7. Which of the following contributed most to your own development during the past year?

Response Option	Fraternity %	Non-Fraternity%
A. Course work in major field of interest	7	21
B. Extra curricular organization activities	24	9
C. Individual or independent research or study	11	16
D. Social life (dating, parties, etc.)	15	9
E. Course work in general	9	13
F. Friendships made	13	11
G. Job experience	9	11
H. Contacts with faculty member(s)	0	4
I. Other	11	7
Total (may not = 100 due to rounding)	99	101

TABLE 3

Responses to Item #10 on 1969 USC

#10. What is the main reason you feel there are few black students at the University of Maryland at College Park?

Response Option	Fraternity %	Non-Fraternity %
A. Blacks prefer to go to black colleges	19	36
B. The University discourages them from coming because of its tough academic reputation	19	13
C. The University's racist practices discourage them from coming.	9	9
D. The University's racist image discourages them	17	13
E. Don't know	15	20
F. Other	21	9
Total	100	100

TABLE 4

Responses to Item #11 on 1969 USC

#11. What do you feel is the best way for the state of Maryland to provide higher education for blacks and whites?

Response Option	Fraternity%	Non-Fraternity%
A. Improve the quality of the predominantly black colleges in the state to bring them up to the level of the University	40	30
B. Require a certain % of white and black students at each college	5	2
C. Let things happen naturally with no further program	16	25
D. Work actively to draw whites to predominantly black colleges and blacks to predominantly white colleges.	13	18
E. Other	24	25
Total (may not = 100 due to rounding)	98	100

TABLE 5

Means* on USC Opinion Items

	Item	Fraternity Mean	Non-Fraternity Mean	t
30.	Most of my courses are stimulating and exciting	2.25	2.13	.58
30a	The University should actively recruit black students	2.02	2.18	.58
31.	Most faculty advisors here act like they really care about students	2.14	1.91	1.11
32.	Most instructors here act like they really care about students	2.10	2.00	.53
33.	Most administrators here act like they really care about students.	2.25	2.38	.62
34.	The University should use its influence to improve social conditions in the state	1.77	1.71	.25
35.	University students have ample opportunity to participate in University policy making	1.86	2.38	2.13**
36.	I am here for an education; let other people "get involved" on campus	2.42	2.59	.79
37.	There should be a special college for new students undecided as to their major	1.98	1.64	1.62
38.	The University should suspend students who disrupt the normal operation of the University	1.78	1.95	.65
39.	Most courses require intensive study and preparation outside the classroom	1.84	1.64	.93
40.	Most organized student activities on campus are ridiculous	2.29	2.52	1.13
41.	Major University-wide events draw lots of support and enthusiasm	2.06	1.95	.56
42.	There are many facilities and opportunities on campus for individual creative activities	1.59	1.71	.59
43.	At the beginning of a course, there is no way to tell who will get what grade	2.02	1.71	1.51

TABLE 5 (Continued)

Means* on USC Opinion Items

	Item	Fraternity Mean	Non-Fraternity Mean	t
44.	Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available	1.88	2.31	1.80
45	I was a leader in high school	1.47	1.91	2.14**

*Values assigned: 0 strongly agree, 1 agree, 2 neutral, 3 disagree, 4 strongly disagree

**significant at $p < .05$

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